Rail link between New Delhi and Hanoi

1029. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal of starting Asia-Rail from New Delhi to Hanoi and whether any steps have been taken to conduct a feasibility study;

(b) whether his Ministry has given 'Green signal' to this project; and

(c) if so, the details of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) During the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meetings in Phnom Pehn in June 2003, the member countries, namely, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam, agreed to the desirability of a rail link from New Delhi to Hanoi, Rail networks exist in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, but there are missing links that would need to be laid to complete New Delhi-Hanoi rail link.

The Government is currently examining the technical feasibility of laying the missing link across India-Myanmar border, a stretch of about 300 km through hilly terrain betwen Jiribam railway station in Manipur and Kalay in Myanmar. The feasibility study will be conducted thereafter. As regard laying of missing links between Myanmar-Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam and restoration/upgradation of existing rail links, there is an ASEAN rail connectivity programme from Singapore to Kunming that is expected to take care of the same.

Indians in Pakistani Jails

1030. DR. KARAN SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian fishermen, civilians and defence personnel in Pakistani jails, as on September 1, 2003; and how many of them have been in jails there for over five years;

(b) whether Goverment have any reports about their condition in

Pak jails and if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of Pakistanis in Indian jails and how many of them have already outlived their terms; and

(d) the steps taken or being taken for ending their incarceration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) According to available information, as on 1 September 2003,74 Indian fishermen, 899 civilians and 54 missing defence personnel were believed to be in Pakistan's custody.

(b) From time to time, the returning Indian prisoners have informed that the Indians under Pakistani custody are living in difficult conditions and some of them have lost their mental balance.

(c) and (d) During the year 2003,114 Pakistani have been released till date. It has been decided to grant consular access to 77 more Pakistani nationals on December 1.1.2003.

Prince Charles's visit to India

†1031. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Prince Charles's visit to India;

(b) whether any political or trade agreements have been entered into between both the countries during the visit; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, visited India at the invitation of Vice-President from 28th October—5th November 2003. The Prince called on Rashtrapatiji and met Prime Minister. Vice-President hosted a banquet in honour of the Prince. The Prince of Wales also visited Haryana, Rajasthan and Mumbai.

(b) and (c) No agreements were signed during the visit.

Agreements with South Africa

1032. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

†Original notice of trie question was received in Hindi.